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Ford Confirms Justice Official Gave Him Douglas Inquiry Data

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 4 — President Ford said today that he received information from the Department of Justice during his unsuccessful effort to get the House of Representatives to impeach Associate Justice William O. Douglas of the Supreme Court.

At a news conference in Atlanta, the President was asked whether as a Representative he had "access or were you slipped any secret F.B.I. data" in his inquiry into Justice Douglas's financial affairs in 1970.

The President said he did not know the source of the information he was given, g"but I was given information by a high-ranking official of the Department of Justice."

"I do not know what the source of the information was," he added. Later in the news conference he said the information was given to him by Will Wilson, then Assistant Attorney General in the Criminal Division.

During Mr. Ford's confirmation hearings as Vice President in November, 1973, he said he received the information in response to a request he had made to then Attorney General John N. Mitchell. The testimony was not widely noted at the time, and the question arose again this week after it was revived in a syndicated column by Jack Anderson.

Shortly after his request to Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Ford testified, "An Assistant Attorney General, Mr. Will Wilson, contacted me and came to my office and indicated to me that there was some information they had. He would not go into the depth or the detail of that information. He simply indicated to me that there were certain areas of inquiry that I ought to pursue and on the basis of those leads, not any factual information, I sought to conduct my own investigation with little or no cooperation from the Department of Justice thereafter."

Mr. Wilson, reached by telephone in Austin, Tex., said that he gave Mr. Ford no reports on Federal Bureau of Investigation letterheads in 1970, but that some of the information may have come from the F.B.I. He said that what he gave Mr. Ford was a one-or-two-page list of dates and names.

"It would be lead material," he said, "the kind of thing a reported would use to start out on a story."